

METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR PROVIDING CAREER GUIDANCE INFORMATION

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

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1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates generally to information systems, and more specifically, to a method and system for
10 delivering career guidance information over a network.

2. Background of the Invention

Present-day network systems including the Internet provide
15 access to a wealth of information. In particular, career information in the form of survey data is available at various government and private sites. However, such information is only partially useful to a person seeking career guidance such as a high school student attempting to plan their course-of-study and
20 potential post-secondary educational needs, or a college student or person seeking an alternative career. The information is not organized for browsing of career options and typically includes little or no information about requirements for a particular career or the day-to-day work life of a person involved in a

particular career. As the additional information described above is critical in making career decisions, as well as for academic planning, the additional information needs to be accessible to students and others making career decisions.

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Further, guidance counselors and agencies need a tool for providing such information to students and others, in order to serve more persons more efficiently and to include a quantity and organization of information not available through
10 traditional means such as guidance office books and pamphlets.

Therefore, it would be desirable to provide a method and system for providing career guidance information in an organized fashion using a computer program. It would further be desirable
15 to provide a computer program for career guidance that accesses information on the Internet, providing up-to-date information via an Internet portal without requiring continual upgrade of the computer program in order to present up-to-date career information, while providing some information encoded in media
20 such as compact disc read-only-memory (CD-ROM) or digital video disc (DVD).

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The above objective of providing organized and up-to-date career guidance information is achieved in a method and system.

5 The method provides a career browser user interface from which a user selects a career from a drop-down list for one of multiple career categories. In response to selection of a career from a list, a screen is loaded containing career information such as a description of the job, educational requirements and salary
10 ranges. A menu bar is provided for selection of other career sub-information including options for a "day-in-the-life" video, helper "bots" or conversational assistants that can interact with the user via voice or text interface, job statistics information and navigation controls. The information provided
15 for the options (including video and audio information) as well as for the description area may be loaded from a storage media such as CD-ROM or loaded from servers on the Internet. Internet content is formatted for use within the display area of the career browser and the menu bar added, so that seamless
20 integration of CD-ROM stored content and Internet loaded content is provided.

The foregoing and other objectives, features, and advantages of the invention will be apparent from the following,

more particular, description of the preferred embodiment of the invention, as illustrated in the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a block diagram depicting a networked computer system in which an embodiment of the invention may be practiced.

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Figure 2 is a pictorial diagram depicting a user interface of a program in accordance with an embodiment of the invention.

Figure 3 is a pictorial diagram depicting another user
10 interface of a program in accordance with an embodiment of the invention.

Figure 4 is a flowchart depicting operation of a career
guidance system in accordance with an embodiment of the
15 invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Referring now to **Figure 1**, a system **10** in which embodiments of the present invention may be practiced is depicted in a block diagram. A server **12** is coupled to a signal-bearing media in the form of hard disk storage **13** having content available and optionally program instructions in the form of web page instructions for practicing portions of a method in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention that are loaded into a memory **19A** and executed by one or more central processing units **18A** (CPU). Server **12** is coupled to an end-user computer **14** via network connection **11**, which may be an Ethernet connection coupled to routers, bridges or other terminal equipment for connection to a wide-area network, and thereby to the Internet. Alternatively, network connection may be a modem, DSL or cable modem connection coupled to end-user computer **14** for direct connection to the Internet as is typical in home installations. As such, network connection **11** represents a connection to the Internet or other suitable platform for connection to remote systems such as server **12**. The present invention uses the network depicted in **Figure 1** to remotely deliver career information content in response to activity of a browser executed by a processor (CPU) **18** from a memory **19** within end-user computer **14**. When a user having access to end-user computer

12 coupled to network connection **11** operates a program product of the present invention via the executing browser, the browser provides the user interface of the present invention which provides information on various careers in response to selection
5 of a career from a job category.

End-user computer **12** is coupled to a graphical display **16** and input devices such as a keyboard **15** and mouse **17** providing interactivity with the browser program in order to provide
10 access to the world-wide-web (WWW) and to the local program and career content of the present invention. End-user computer includes a storage media device **13** for loading the program of the present invention, generally a CD-ROM or DVD drive.

Server **10** is accessed via the program of the present invention
15 and may also be accessed directly by browser through the main browser window. Server **10** thus either provides career content in addition to that available from storage media inserted in storage media device **13**, or may alternative provide the entire content via an Internet web page. A third alternative is that
20 all content is local to end-user computer **14** and is loaded on-the-fly from storage media device **13** or copied to internal (hard drive) storage for access and execution via processor **18**. A voice interface **15A** is also provided in some embodiments of the present invention to enable interaction with "helpers" via

voice. Voice interface **15A** generally includes software and a sound interface within end-user computer **14** coupled to a headset as shown, but other voice interface configurations are well-known and are contemplated for use in providing voice input and
5 output in accordance with embodiments of the present invention.

Referring now to **Figure 2**, graphical output **20** of a browser program interacting with a user is depicted as an output as might be displayed on graphical display **16**. Browser output **22**
10 may be of a type generally in use, such as Navigator (manufactured by Netscape) or Internet Explorer (manufactured by Microsoft) or may alternatively be a dedicated program loaded into end-user computer **14** memory **19**. A location bar **21** permits the user of the browser to direct the browser to interact with a
15 web page. Browser output **22** depicts the graphical content of a web page, which may be a local file or a web page provided via an Internet world-wide-web (WWW) site. A set of job categories **24**, such as entertainment, medicine, technology, manufacturing, etc. are displayed within browser output **22**. A user selects the
20 category by activating a drop-down list **26** associated with the job category and then selects a particular career from the drop down list. Upon selection, a page for the particular career is loaded into browser **20**.

Referring now to **Figure 3** a second user interface in accordance with an embodiment of the present invention is depicted. After selection of a career as described above, browser **20** display area **22** (in response to loading of a local
5 file, Internet page or combination of local and Internet-served information) displays a career description **33** and a further information options menu **32**. The description contains summary information for a particular career and options menu **32** includes choices such as video, which activates playing of a day-in-the-
10 life video, generally via a media player window **34**, but may be provided within a window of browser display **22** or a video page may be loaded replacing menu **32** and career description **33**. The day-in-the life video may include sound, text subtitles or both, and may be retrieved from local storage within end-user computer
15 **14** or downloaded from server **12**.

The day-in-the-life video described above is generally a depicting of what the day-to-day environment and tasks are for the particular selected career, rather than an talking interview
20 format video. Options menu **32** also includes a helper option that loads a conversational helper such as chat helper bot depicted in chat window **35**. The conversational helper interacts using text display **36** from the helper and the user can interact with the helper by entering text in entry area **37** and activating

button **38** to transmit the entered text. Alternatively, a voice-interactive helper may be employed that interacts via voice interface **15A**, requiring no on-screen display. However, either conversational helper may also include animations that provide further interaction with the user. Menu **32** options also include options for statistical information and further job description information which are displayed in area **33** in response to activation of menu **32** options.

In the exemplary browser output, all of the operational items associated with the example are depicted as being located within one web page including the pop-up windows depicted, but multiple pages may be used to separate the various steps associated with browsing career information. Internet-loaded content may be loaded from any server and formatted to include menu **32** so that a seamless integration of information provide, for example, from governmental sources provides up-to-date information that is presented within the graphical user interface of the present invention. Menu **32** may be provided in other areas of browser display area **22**, including the top, bottom and right side of the display area **22** and the location and contents of menu **32**, may be adjusted for presentation of Internet-loaded content.

Referring now to **Figure 4**, a method in accordance with an embodiment of the invention is depicted in a flowchart. First, a user selects (**step 50**) a career category by activating one of drop-down lists **26**. Selection of the list item corresponding to a particular career (**step 51**) causes loading of a page (**step 52**) that includes a career description and a menu of further information items including video, conversational helpers and job statistics options. Finally, upon selection of menu items from the loaded page, content is loaded (from local files, the Internet or both) in conformity with the selected menu option (**step 53**).

While the invention has been particularly shown and described with reference to the preferred embodiments thereof, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that the foregoing and other changes in form, and details may be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.